Application 7:  Managing the Differentiated Learning Environment

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Managing the Differentiated Learning Environment

Introduction

Creating a plan for development and implementation of differentiated instruction so as to reach and engage all students is vital. As Thompson (Laureate Inc., 2009) stated in our class video last week, differentiated instruction is more about the teacher’s state of mind. It is important as an educator to propose a plan of action and then continue to build upon it and make it better.

Tools to Discover Learning Styles and Intelligences

There are two wonderful websites that I have already used within my classes to determine learning styles and intelligences. Both are accurate and allow students to understand what their learning profile says about them.

For multiple intelligences:

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/getsource.cfm?id=10261>

For learning styles:

<http://www.educationplanner.org/education_planner/discovering_article.asp?sponsor=2859&articleName=Learning_Styles_Quiz>

Students can easily take these tests via any computer with internet connection and print out the results.

Modifying Learning Environment

My classroom is fortunately big enough to allow for a reading nook, computer tables, as well as student desks, and a couple extra sitting spaces. By allowing students free movement or choice of area while working, students are able to choose areas that will be more conducive to their learning style. At times I will also shut off a section of lighting allowing for a more relaxed atmosphere.

Differentiated Elements

To add differentiated activities using technology, I have first set up virtual classrooms via the Tween Tribune (2010). Students have the option of reading news articles from the tweentribune.com or reading from their own book. Later this school year, I will be creating a wiki site for my classes to post work and discuss assignments. A coworker and I also applied and received a grant to purchase a class set of Kindles. By integrating technology, such as e-readers, we can provide low-level readers a way to make reading more exciting. Low-level readers will also enjoy the opportunity to read lower level books without drawing attention to themselves. Throughout the rest of this school year, it will be my goal to continue to add new forms of technology or proceed to use the technology in different ways.

Alternate Types of Assessments

As I would like to allow for more choices for assessments, I would like to establish and utilize a Multiple Intelligence and Technology choice board much like the one presented by Grace Smith (Laureate Inc., 2009). According to Bray, Brown, and Green (2004) states “differentiated instruction can be thought of as a way to of teaching that provides the student with many ways to access, process, and output information that best meets their instructional needs” (p. 55).

Open Discussion

Obtaining and maintaining new technologies will require open discussions and help from administration. Conversing with fellow teachers, technology staff, and principals expresses a need for new and updated technology. I have already been in talks with administration as the 7th grade English classes will be the first in the district to utilize e-readers. My website is open to all those with access to internet allowing students and parents to easily contact me as well as stay updated with classroom activities. (<https://sites.google.com/site/englishwithgerdes/>)

Conclusion

Making sure to keep differentiated instruction in mind ensures that educators will allow for different options. Proposing a plan of action and continuing with improvement establishes a frame of mind and a place from which to grow.

References

Bray, M., Brown, A., & Green, T. (2004). *Technology and the diverse learner: A guide to classroom practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Jacobson, A. (2010). Tween Tribune [Electronic version]. Retrieved December 16, 2010, from <http://tweentribune.com/frontpage>

Laureate Education, Inc. (Producer). (2009). Managing the differentiated classroom. [Motion picture]. Reaching and Engaging All Learners Through Technology; Baltimore.

Laureate Education, Inc. (Producer). (2009). Knowing your students. [Motion picture]. Reaching and Engaging All Learners Through Technolgy; Baltimore.

Walden University M.S. in Education Program

Formative Evaluative Criteria for Applications and Reflective Essays

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Quality of Work Submitted**  ***Work reflects graduate-level critical, analytical thinking.*** | **A: Exemplary Work** A = 4.00; A- = 3.75 ***All of the previous, in addition to the following:*** | **B: Graduate Level Work**  **B+ = 3.50; B = 3.00;**  **B- = 2.75**  ***All of the previous, in addition to the following:*** | **C: Minimal Work**  **C+ = 2.50; C = 2.00;**  **C- = 1.75** | **F: Work Submitted but Unacceptable** F = 1.00 |
| ***Adherence to Assignment Expectations***  *The extent to which work meets the assigned criteria.* | Assignment exceeds expectations,  integrating additional material and/or information.  Assignment demonstrates exceptional breadth and depth. | All parts of the assignment are completed, with fully developed topics.  The work is presented in a thorough and detailed manner.  Assignment demonstrates appropriate breadth and depth. | Most parts of assignment are completed.  Topics are not fully developed.  Assignment demonstrates minimal depth and breadth. | Does not fulfill the expectations of the assignment.  Key components are not included  Assignment lacks breadth and depth. |
| ***Assimilation and Synthesis of Ideas***  The extent to which the work reflects the student’s ability to-   1. Understand the assignment’s purpose; 2. Understand and analyze material in videos, readings, and   discussions;   1. *Apply presented strategies*   ***\*\*****May include, but are not limited to, scholarly articles, collegial discussions; information from conferences, in service, faculty development, and/or meetings. Outside sources also may include materials from previous Walden MSED courses, videos, and readings. (but aren’t currently being used in this course) In addition, students may refer to the course Webliography, course reference list (Bibliography), and the theoretical foundations, all of which are located in the eCollege course page.* | Demonstrates the ability intellectually to explore and/or implement key instructional concepts.  Demonstrates exceptional inclusion of major points, using creditable sources\*\*, in addition to course videos or required readings.  Demonstrates insightful reflection and/or critical thinking. | Demonstrates a clear understanding of the assignment’s purpose.  Includes specific information from course videos or required readings to support major points.  Provides careful consideration of key instructional concepts. | Shows some degree of understanding of the assignment’s purpose.  Generally applies theories, concepts, and/or strategies correctly, with ideas unclear and/or underdeveloped  Minimally includes specific information from course videos or required readings. | Shows a lack of understanding of the assignment’s purpose.    Does not apply theories, concepts, and/or strategies  Does not include specific information from course videos or required readings. |
| ***Written Expression and Formatting***  *The extent to which scholarly, critical, analytical writing is presented in APA format;*  *Standard Edited English ( i.e. correct grammar, mechanics).* | Represents scholarly writing in a correct APA format.  Work is unified around a central purpose with well-developed ideas, logically organized in paragraph structure with clear transitions.  Effective sentence variety; clear, concise, and powerful expression are evident.  Work is written in Standard Edited English. No prominent errors interfere with reading. | Work is well organized with correct APA formatting throughout.  Ideas are clearly and concisely expressed.  Elements of effective communication such as an introduction and conclusion are included.  Work is written in Standard Edited English with few, if any, grammatical or mechanical errors | Somewhat represents mature, scholarly, graduate-level writing, with APA generally followed.  Ideas are not clearly and concisely expressed.  Elements of effective communication such as an introduction and conclusion are not included.  Work contains more than a few grammatical, or mechanical errors. | The quality of writing and/or APA formatting are not acceptable for graduate level work.  Major points do not reflect appropriate elements of communication.  No effort to express ideas clearly and concisely.  Work is not written in Standard Edited English. Contains many grammatical or mechanical errors |
|  | **A: Exemplary Work** A = 4.00; A- = 3.75 ***All of the previous, in addition to the following:*** | **B: Graduate Level Work**  **B+ = 3.50; B = 3.00;**  **B- = 2.75**  ***All of the previous, in addition to the following:*** | **C: Minimal Work**  **C+ = 2.50; C = 2.00;**  **C- = 1.75** | **F: Work Submitted but Unacceptable** F = 1.00 |

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